The Aesthetics and Politics of Inscriptions in Imperial Greek Literature*

Alexei Zadorojnyi

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to examine socio-cultural assumptions about the standing of epigraphic writing among the *pepaideumenoi* of the empire in the second century CE, and, relatedly, to sketch the ideologies of Greek epigraphic writtenness along the seams of select key passages from authors of the Second Sophistic. In the first section, the paper investigates attitudes to epigraphic writing in Pollux' *Onomasticon* and highlights intertextual relationships between the definitions provided in the relevant lemma and previous literary traditions, while pointing out to the semantic and cultural tension construed around epigraphic literacy in the *Onomasticon* itself. In the second part, the argument addresses issues of epigraphic literacy, readability and elitarian monumentalisation by zeroing in on a passage from Arrian's *Periplous* and dissecting the spectrum of meanings implied in Greek adjective *eusēmos*. The third section examines the ideological force of graffitism which sources of second century CE cast as a socio-cultural antipode of high epigraphy.

Key words: Pollux; Second Sophistic; Atticism; epigraphic intertexts; literary epigraphy; antiquarianism; Arrian; readability; *eusēmos*; graffiti; *asēmos*.

Inscriptions mentioned and/or narrated in imperial Greek literature deserve to be read as a special interface of aesthetic and social sensibilities among the elite Greco-Romans – "elite" being a catch-all name for active involvement in the high-profile discourse as well as (often) high social standing of the authors and their target audiences. It is from this discourse, from the "literary" sources broadly understood, that we can gauge the contemporary expectations

about the materiality of the epigraphic habit, as well as map it in a more nuanced way onto the socio-cultural concerns of the empire's educated and politically alert groups.[1]

My argument below is based on analysis of two illustrative yet largely overlooked passages from second century CE texts that both have strong claims on the cultural capital and across-the-board eminence: the *Onomasticon* by the sophist and scholar Julius Pollux of Naucratis, who held the imperial chair of rhetoric in Athens in 180s,[2] and the *Periplous of the Black Sea* by Flavius Arrian of Nicomedia, a statesman and writer who flourished in the first half of the century. In order to throw into relief the literate mindset behind Arrian's text, a passage from the *Civil Wars* by Appian of Alexandria will be revisited for the idea of graffiti as an "inferior" class of inscriptions.

I

Pollux's *Onomasticon* is an ambitiously pitched (each of its ten books has a dedication to Commodus Caesar) work of lexicography, aiming to take stock of the available and culturally healthy Greek vocabulary. It is therefore a project that fits in with the mainstream preoccupation of Greek intelligentsia of the time, namely the reassertion and perpetuation of Hellenic identity via emphatically displayed command and deployment of the language of classical Greek literature (think "Second Sophistic" and "Atticism").[3] Pollux's approach[4] is that of an Atticist but a liberal and inclusive Atticist. Thus, he embraces the diction of Herodotus, New Comedy and some Hellenistic historians as authoritative and sufficiently classical; he also takes into account the current norms of lexical usage, instead of looking down upon them. He does not, however, simply proffer a catalogue of quality words; rather, he follows the tradition of organizing the linguistic material into semantic or thematic clusters, almost like a modern thesaurus. Having said that, the overall book-by-book order of

entries in the *Onomasticon*[5] is not always immediately evident. Pollux states himself that he going to cover the gods first, "as befits pious men", but then he will proceed at random (1.2 τὰ δ' ἄλλα ὡς ἂν ἕκαστον ἐπέλθῃ τάξομεν). Nonetheless, scholarship is increasingly swayed to accept that behind Pollux's word-lists and comments there is a sense of agenda and a kind of meta-narrative of assumptions about "the paradigmatic relationships at the heart of Romano-Greek society" (König and Whitmarsh 2007: 34) that language reflects, or should reflect.[6] Over and above its panoramic focus on the aesthetics of the verbal resources of Hellenic *paideia* (1.1 πεφιλοτίμηται... εἰς κάλλους ἐκλογήν, "the ambition has been ... to select what is beautiful"),[7] the *Onomasticon* gives voice to the classicizing Deuterosophistic imagination about the world wherein *paideia* is operative.

Book 5 of the *Onomasticon* contains an entry on epigraphic writing, γράμματα ἐν στήλαις (5.149-50). While the first half of Book 5 is dedicated to diverse words that pertain to hunting, the passage on epigraphy belongs in the eclectic (cf. 5.103 χύδην) second half[8] and is sandwiched between the synonyms of προΐσχεσθαι, "to hold forth" (5.149) and of διακορής, "satiated" (5.151), followed by "unambiguous", ἀναμφίβολον (5.152). Not long thereafter the book ends (5.169-70) with what is in effect a scholion on a pair of Plato's terms (*Ti*. 35a): "the Same" (τὸ μὲν ταὐτόν = permanent, stable, non-material) *vs* "the Different" (τὸ δὲ θάτερον = changeable, unstable, transient).

The entry on γράμματα ἐν στήλαις (5.149-50) is, bluntly, a list of participles and adjectives that can apply to epigraphic writing:[9]

	Γράμματα ἐν στήλαις	Writing on stelae:
I	ἐγγεγραμμένα, ἐγκεχαραγμένα, ἐγκεκολαμμένα, ἐνσεσημασμένα,	inscribed, incised, engraved,

	ἐντετυπωμένα, ἐγκείμενα, ἐναποκείμενα, ἐγκατακείμενα, ἐμπεποιημένα, ἐνειργασμένα, ἐνόντα, ἐγγεγλυμμένα.	stamped, imprinted, situated, preserved, laid down, worked-in, built-in, present, carved.
II	καὶ ἐγγράψας, ἐγχαράξας, ἐγκολάψας, ἐνσημηνάμενος, ἐγκόψας, ἐγγλύψας, ἐνθείς, ἐνεργασάμενος, ἐγκαταθέμενος, ἐμποιήσας, ἐντυπώσας, ἐντυπωσάμενος, κοιλάνας, βαθύνας.	And: to inscribe, to incise, to engrave, to stamp, to cut, to carve, to put it, to build in, to put in, to work in, to imprint (twice), to hollow, to drive deep.
III	καὶ τὰ μὲν ὑπέργεια, ἐπιφανῆ, ἔκδηλα πρόδηλα, ἐπίδηλα, ἐπίσημα, θεατά εὐθέατα – τὸ γὰρ εὔσημα εὐτελές –	And: either (*men*) above-ground, conspicuous, patent, in sight, manifest, marked, visible, well-visible ("well-marked" is cheap though).
IVa	τὰ δ' ὑπόγεια, ἀφανῆ, ἄδηλα,	Or: (*d'*) under-ground, out of sight, unseen.
IVb	τὰ δὲ χρόνια, ἀρχαῖα παναρχαῖα, παλαιά παμπάλαια, ἄσημα, ἀσαφῆ, συγκεχυμένα, ἀμυδρά, ἀμαυρά, ἐξίτηλα, ἀθέατα δυσθέατα, δύσγνωστα	And (*de*): aged, ancient, very ancient, old, very old, indistinct, unclear, blurred, faint, obscure, evanescent, invisible, hardly

ἄγνωστα, δυσγνώριστα ἀγνώριστα, ἀτέκμαρτα, δυσόρατα ἀνόρατα ἀδιόρατα, κατερρυηκότα ἐξερρυηκότα διερρυηκότα, δυσσύμβολα ἀξύμβολα, δυσείκαστα, ὕποπτα ἀνέποπτα.*	visible, hard to understand, unknowable, hard to recognize, unrecognizable, unverifiable, hard to see, invisible, indiscernible, ruined, derelict, hard to read, unfigurable, unguessable, suspect, undetectable.
*ἀνέποπτα Kühn: mss ἀνύποπτα	

A salient, if foreseeable, aspect of this word-hoard is its intertextual saturation. Pollux's choice of words across the *Onomasticon* is strategically beholden to classical Greek literature. Sometimes he would identify his authorities (3.1 οἱ δόκιμοι τὴν γλῶτταν); in passages where he does not name a single author, as is the case in 5.149-50, it is worthwhile to explore his intertextual matrix all the same.[10] While pinpointing a classical precedent (that, moreover, deals with epigraphic writing!) for Pollux's every word or form in our passage may not be altogether easy, at least two adjectives seem to stand out from the list: ἀμυδρά and ἐξίτηλα. The former is a fairly popular epithet in imperial Greek authors who find themselves talking about ancient inscriptions (e.g. Plut. *Rom*. 7.8; Paus. 6.15.8; Luc. *VH* 1.7; Cass. Dio 37.9.2); crucially, it is also attested in reportage of inscriptions (γράμματα) in Thucydides (6.54.7) and "Demosthenes" (*In Nearam* 76). The adjective ἐξίτηλος, in turn, combines with a wide range of objects or qualities that become enfeebled and vestigial. This may befall images (e.g. impression of a seal: Philo *De eo quod deterius potiori insidiatur* 76; mural paintings: Paus. 10.38.9 γραφαὶ... ἐπὶ τῶν τοίχων) and writing,[11] such as manuscript text (Galen *In Hippocratis librum vi epidemiarum commentarii*, 1 praef. vol. 17A.795K) or archival records (Cass. Dio 57.16.2). Pollux, who elsewhere gives ἐξίτηλος among the

descriptors of faded dye (βαφή, 1.44),[12] might be thinking along those lines in 5.150 too. Yet the odds are strong that for the neuter plural ἐξίτηλα the intertextual lodestar was the proem of Herodotus' *Histories* (ὡς μήτε τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων τῷ χρόνῳ ἐξίτηλα γένηται).[13] Can it be that the *Onomasticon* is recalling Herodotus here? (In which case Pollux ought to be seen as a forerunner of John Moles's reading of the Herodotean proem as metaphor of monument![14]) It is no doubt possible to carry on the quest for intertexts relevant to Pollux's passage, but ἀμυδρά and ἐξίτηλα are sufficient proof that epigraphic writing was on the radar of the stylistically erudite and self-conscious discourse of the Second Sophistic.[15]

The contents and, critically, the structure of Pollux's entry provide more consequential clues about the aesthetical and, at the end of the day, cultural contours of epigraphic writing itself in the discoursal universe – as distinct from the historical lifeworld – of the second century *pepaideumenos*. Now, it is likely that Pollux associates γράμματα ἐν στήλαις primarily with funerary epigraphy, because elsewhere in the *Onomasticon* he includes "to set up a stele, to inscribe an inscription" (στήλην ἀναστῆσαι, ἐπίγραμμα ἐπιγράψαι) under τάφος, "tomb" (3.102). Yet apart from the fact there are also inscribed non-funerary stelae mentioned in the *Onomasticon* (10.97, 10.146, 10.148), the lexical reach of the passage suggests that Pollux is not thinking exclusively of tomb-inscriptions: for example, the passive perfect participle of ἐντυπόω is readily usable about inscribed laws and decrees (Poll. 8.128; cf. St Paul, *2 Corinth*. 3.7, Euseb. *Hist.Eccl.* 9.7.1) or an engraved dedicatory artefact (Ath. 11.466e, 489b-c). We are thus entitled to hope that Pollux's text would unlock his attitude to epigraphy wholesale, as it were – that is, as a visual, cognitive, and aesthetical phenomenon in the world the *Onomasticon* sets out to chart.

On closer inspection, 5.149-50 is organised into four clusters of synonyms, as the layout of the Greek text and my translation above attempt to show. Group I zeroes in on the inscription *qua* product of writerly effort in the literal sense, of words forcefully attached (scratched, carved...) to the *stele*'s surface and henceforth stored on that surface (ἐγκείμενα, ἐναποκείμενα, ἐγκατακείμενα... ἐνόντα). The subject of group II is the inscription's creator;[16] signally, all the Greek participles (needless to say, the infinitives of the English translation are a cop-out on the translator's behalf) are in masculine singular. Even though the masc. nom. sing. form is pretty much mandatory for the adjectives and participles that undergo synonymization in the *Onomasticon* (e.g. 1.20-1, 5.144, 8.80), the implications of this morphological habit should be weighed with due seriousness; to Pollux, epigraphy is confirmed as men's (yet another) prerogative at the most bedrock level of language.[17] Group III is about the visibility and conspicuousness of inscribed writing as successfully consummated texts on display. By contrast, the last and longest inventory (IVa-b) conjures up the image of inscriptions that do not open to the viewer's gaze and understanding, of texts affected by time and material decay (συγκεχυμένα... κατερρυηκότα, ἐξερρυηκότα, διερρυηκότα) which causes a communicative shutdown.

I contend that several insights into the perception of epigraphic writing in the Second Sophistic can be gained from the passage. The premises Pollux works from are: a) the ontological link between the text and its hard surface (Groups I-II); b) the acceptance of immanently masculine authorship (Group II); c) visual display as the teleological epigraphic scenario (Group III); d) the anticipation that inscriptions would be ancient and difficult to make out (Group IVb).

The last point has particular resonance in the context of the Second Sophistic, when engagement with the classical Greek past is paramount for the purposes of cultural articulation.[18] For the educated Greeks of this period "very ancient" inscriptions are right up their street, geographically but also programmatically as evinced by the fact that in a number of VIP inscriptions from the period archaic styling of characters is attempted.[19] So it is hardly surprising that the antiquarian appreciation of "old" epigraphic textuality manifests itself in literature. Consider, for instance, how Remus in the Plutarchan *Life of Romulus*, 7.8 describes the trough in which he and his brother had been exposed as infants:

> the trough still exists and is preserved, with its bronze girdles engraved with faint characters (ἔστι δ᾽ ἡ σκάφη καὶ σῴζεται, χαλκοῖς ὑποζώσμασι γραμμάτων ἀμυδρῶν ἐγκεχαραγμένων) that would be perhaps useless as recognition tokens for our parents...

Remus invokes an inscription from his own, on the diegetic time scale not at all ancient, past in a tone that sounds oddly similar to reportage of bona fide antiques in Pausanias' *Periegesis*. Besides, it is symptomatic that Remus doubts the readerly value of the "faint characters". In the Deuterosophistic narrative, an archaic inscription is relished as a representamen rather than as actual text; the words do not even have to be deciphered – their role is to be poignantly cryptic and exotic. Consider how Pausanias lingers over the boustrophedon inscription on the Chest of Cypselus (5.17.6 "inscriptions written in the ancient characters... the inscriptions... are written in winding turns difficult to figure out", ἐπιγράμματα... γράμμασι τοῖς ἀρχαίοις γεγραμμένα... γέγραπται... τὰ ἐπιγράμματα ἑλιγμοῖς συμβαλέσθαι χαλεποῖς), or how a mysterious tablet is brought into play in Plutarch's dialogue *On the Daimonion of Socrates*:

> Before the tomb [of Alcmena] lay a bronze tablet containing many characters, amazingly ancient – for it was not possible to understand anything from them (πίναξ χαλκοῦς ἔχων γράμματα πολλὰ θαυμαστὸν ὡς παμπάλαια· γνῶναι γὰρ ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐδὲν παρεῖχε), although they appeared clearly (ἐκφανέντα) after the bronze was washed. The lettering was peculiar and foreign (ἴδιός τις ὁ τύπος καὶ βαρβαρικὸς τῶν χαρακτήρων), very close to the Egyptian. (577F)[20]

The thesis that the gaze and imagination of the insiders of the second-century Greek classicism and antiquarianism is inexorably pulled towards epigraphic record which is ancient *simpliciter*, finds further support in the literary snapshots of inscriptions that have been eaten away by time to the point of becoming symbolic rather than legible texts. A good example is Lucian's rather detailed ecphrastic account of the tomb of the legendary Scythian sage and healer Toxaris in Athens, near Dipylon:

> ... Toxaris was found buried there, recognized from the inscription, even though it was not completely visible (τῇ τε ἐπιγραφῇ γνωσθείς, εἰ μὴ πᾶσα ἔτι ἐφαίνετο), and especially by the carving (ἐγκεκόλαπτο) of a Scythian on the stele... Even now you can still see more than half of it, the entire bow and the book; the upper section of the stele and the face time had already disfigured (τὰ δὲ ἄνω τῆς στήλης καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ὁ χρόνος ἤδη ἐλυμήνατό που)... (*Scyth*. 2)

But a more abstract remark on the degeneration of epigraphic surfaces can be no less revealing; Philostratus starts from "wrecked *stelae*" (στηλῶν... τρύφη) when he is busy sketching out the typical features of "an ancient marketplace" (ἀγορᾷ ἀρχαίᾳ) in a generic deserted town (*VA* 6.4.1).[21]

The *Onomasticon* is thus by no means alone or exceptional in its interest in time-worn epigraphic texts. Pollux's readers are expected to encounter and, more importantly, to be able to frame through learned Deuterosophistic language a great deal of inscriptions that are well-nigh effaced and unreadable.[22] The lexicographer cannot help sharing in the antiquarian zeitgeist, yet ultimately his perception of γράμματα ἐν στήλαις stems from the long-standing Greek awareness of the temporal factor per se as a fundamental and endemic constraint for monuments.[23] Monuments are material texts that must confront diachronic uncertainties; Edmund Thomas captures the problem with his concise (and highly transferable) comment on the commemorative capacity of classical Greek tombs:

> Their meaning depended on continued recognition of their visible signs, the sculpted image of the deceased and the writing on the funerary marker. (Thomas 2007: 166)

Pollux's passage dovetails with these concerns about epigraphic writenness. And there is perhaps a whiff of pessimism. It may not be happenstance that Book 5 of the *Onomasticon* finishes with a gloss on the Platonic polarity between the ideal and perennial ταὐτόν and the immanently unstable, worldly θάτερον (5.169-70). What if Pollux is wearing the philosophical hat in his treatment of γράμματα ἐν στήλαις too? The synonyms of 5.149 foreground the hard work that goes into writing on a hard surface, but in 5.150 inscriptions end up in the domain of θάτερον as victims of material and semantic entropy.

II

Let us now head backwards in time from Pollux to Arrian. His *Periplous* of the Black Sea is an account of the inspection trip Arrian undertook as governor of Cappadocia around 131 CE. The book is dedicated to the emperor Hadrian and opens with Arrian's arrival at Trapezus

(today's Trabzon, on the north coast of Turkey). Arrian rapidly moves to tell of the improvements he made to a sanctuary there:

> καὶ οἱ βωμοὶ ἀνεστᾶσιν ἤδη, λίθου μέντοι γε τοῦ τραχέος, καὶ τὰ γράμματα διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ εὔδηλα κεχάρακται, τὸ δὲ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐπίγραμμα καὶ ἡμαρτημένως γέγραπται, οἷα δὴ ὑπὸ βαρβάρων γραφέν. ἔγνωκα οὖν τούς τε βωμοὺς λίθου λευκοῦ ἀναθεῖναι, καὶ τὰ ἐπιγράμματα ἐγχαράξαι εὐσήμοις τοῖς γράμμασιν. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀνδριὰς ἕστηκεν ὁ σός, τῷ μὲν σχήματι ἡδέως – ἀποδείκνυσιν γὰρ τὴν θάλατταν – τὴν δὲ ἐργασίαν οὔτε ὅμοιός σοι οὔτε ἄλλως καλός· ὥστε πέμψον ἀνδριάντα ἄξιον ἐπονομάζεσθαι σὸν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τούτῳ σχήματι· τὸ γὰρ χωρίον ἐπιτηδειότατον εἰς μνήμην αἰώνιον.
>
> The altars are already set up, though in rather rough stone, and as such the inscribed letters are not particularly clear; the Greek inscription is also inaccurately carved, as it was written by barbarians. I therefore decided to rebuild the altars in white stone, and to carve the inscription in clear letters. And though your statue has been erected in a pleasing pose – it points out to the sea – the work neither resembles you nor is beautiful in any other way. So do send a statue worthy to bear your name, in the same pose, for that spot is very well suited to an everlasting monument. (*Peripl. M. Eux*. 1.2-4, trans. A. Liddle, modified)

The cameo narrative[24] showcases the imperial system's commitment to broadcasting power and culture through the medium of monuments and monumental writing;[25] politics and aesthetics are interfused on several levels. Arrian is disappointed with the current state of monumentality at Trapezus, and intervenes on behalf of both the emperor and the linguistic and aesthetical criteria of Hellenism. He cannot put up with the allegedly poor workmanship of the altars and especially the altar inscription which had been written badly by the locals;[26] the staple view that Greek language deteriorates in barbarian environment (e.g. Dio Chrys.

36.9; Plut. *De fac*. 941C)[27] is thereby given a palpable graphological twist. The text of the *Periplous* is vague on how the original altar inscription is related (or not) to Hadrian's statue.[28] One might be tempted to conclude that Arrian has the inscription re-cut for aesthetic and cultural, rather than directly political, reasons. Yet legibility of official writing displayed to the population was part of the administrative etiquette under the empire.[29] And it is significant that the inscription and the emperor's statue are mentioned in such close proximity.[30]

Arrian's passage is also a gambit of literary and social negotiation. On the one hand, through the upgrading of Hadrian's monument the *Periplous* implicitly monumentalizes itself[31] as a project sanctioned from the outset by the propitious powers which the emperor's effigy stands for (cf. 2.4).[32] But Arrian necessarily empowers himself as administrator-cum-narrator too, because he takes credit for the improved monumental landscape at Trapezus. The message appears to be that the elite, here represented by a cultured Greek consular,[33] are veritable stakeholders in construction of the imperial authority and the atmosphere of civilized stateliness by dint of monuments and inscribed texts. The *Periplous* effectively reminds the emperor, under the eyes of the other readers,[34] how the physical aesthetics and promulgation (1.4 "into eternal memory", εἰς μνήμην αἰώνιον) of his own public image and, by the same token, of the empire's *paideia*-friendly regime, are modelled and delivered by high-ranking "intermediaries" (after Boatwright 2000: 25) who are savvy epigraphic and literary designers – such as Arrian.[35] Note that Arrian asks the emperor to send (1.4 πέμψον, cf. 2.1 εἰ δέ σοι δοκεῖ πέμψον μοι) statues to Trapezus (of Hadrian, 1.4; of Hermes and the hero Philesios, 2.1-2) but the inscription he sorted out himself, so that he is in a position to publicize this achievement through the narrative.

Arrian is dissatisfied with the original altar inscription on two counts: the text is bad Greek (ἡμαρτημένως γέγραπται), and the characters themselves are "not clearly cut" (οὐκ εὔδηλα κεχάρακται) in the first place. Arrian decides to have it re-engraved in εὐσήμοις... γράμμασιν, which Aidan Liddle prudently translates "clear letters". It would be perverse to fault Liddle's translation, because the idea of legibility has to be important here and is certainly attested for the Greek adjective.

βιβλίον πᾶς ἂν ἥδιον ἀναγνῷη καὶ ῥᾷον τὸ εὐσημοτέροις γράμμασι γεγραμμένον

Anyone would read a book written in clearer characters with greater pleasure and ease (*Epict. diss.* 2.23.1)[36]

Aesthetic expectations about legibility encompass epigraphic texts too: a Hellenistic inscription from Teos requires the lessor of a temenos to inscribe the contract of the lease "in letters legible and pleasing to the lessees" (lines 43-45 (στήλην ... εἰς ἣν ἀναγράψει ὁ μισθωσάμενος τὴν συγγραφὴν τὴν χαράσσων γράμμασιν εὐσήμοις καὶ ἀρεστοῖς τοῖς μισθώσασιν)).[37]

The semantics of εὔσημος revolves, however, around a more general concept of distinctive, interpretable, and altogether good indication[38] that can appertain to diverse fields: medical symptoms (e.g. Hippocr. *Art*. 26, *Vectiarius* 16; Gal. *De diebus decretoriis* 1.2 vol. 9.776K, 1.7 vol. 9.802K), animal tracks (Theophr. *Caus*. *Pl*. 6.19.5), harmonics (Plut. *De animae procreatione in Timaeo* 1019A), vision (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima mantissa* p. 146-7 Bruns), judgement (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 719B), teaching (e.g. Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 3.158, *Math*. 10.167; Gal. *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis* 3.13 vol. 11.571K;

Artem. 1.65; Porph. *Vita Pythagorae* 48, 50), mention in a literary text (Strabo 10.2.23), and of course speech and more broadly sound (Soph. *Ant*. 1021; Ael. *NA* 4.46, 16.2; Porph. *Abst.* 3.4-5; St Paul *1 Corinth*. 14.9). Functional clarity often gets injected with a taste of demonstrable positivity (growing out of εὖ-, as it were), for example, when talking about favourable divination (e.g. Eur. *IA* 252; Plut. *Caes*. 43.4; esp. Philostr. *VA* 1.31 and 8.35), athletic physique and gait (Philostr. *De gymnastica* 35.16-17, 55.6), singing (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 72.14), onomatopoeia or otherwise dynamic turn of phrase (e.g. [Plut.] *De Homero* 2.194 and 2.202; scholia recentiora Arethae in Pl. *Tht*. ad 184d, p. 440-1 Greene), apt terminology (Aretaeus *De causis et signis acutorum morborum* 1.2.3.1) and, finally, literary diction – Photius regularly uses this word to pay tribute to various writers (e.g. Heliodorus: *Bibl*. cod. 73, 50a, l. 11: λέξεσί τε εὐσήμοις καὶ καθαραῖς), Arrian among them (*Bibliotheca* codex 92, 73a, l. 5). So εὔσημος is about signs that make sense and are "readable" to an echelon of people who have aspirations to structured and definitive knowledge and overtly prioritize "clarity" in visual and verbal culture alike (e.g. Quint. 8.3.62; Luc. *Salt*. 62, *Lexiphanes* 23).[39] A legible inscription is thus a small piece in the vast jigsaw of Greek intellectualism and semantic quality control; elite knowledge (seeing, reading...) is accustomed to demanding and prizing transparent information signage. "Good" signs constitute prestigious knowledge that underwrites social and political prestige.[40]

It is ironic that while Arrian speaks of creating a respectable inscription "in well-legible letters" (εὐσήμοις... γράμμασιν), Pollux dismisses the same adjective as "cheap" (5.150 τὸ γὰρ εὔσημα εὐτελές), that is insufficiently classical, nomenclature for legible and opportunely situated epigraphic writing. Pollux has got a point, for εὔσημος is scarcely represented in classical Greek prose (it occurs a few times in tragedy). Still, the fact that Arrian has used a word that belongs somewhat more firmly in the *koinê* – not least because

his philosophical training (with Epictetus) justifies a blasé attitude about elegant style![41] – does not destroy the main outcome of the *Periplous* episode, namely that "well-legible letters" are the aesthetically and politically appropriate visualisation of elite textual standards.

III

The contrast between Pollux's rejection and Arrian's espousal of the phrase εὔσημα γράμματα thus calls attention to a relatively minor faultline in the ideology of Greek writtenness. Much more promising could be the contrast between "quality" epigraphy as referred to in literature, and the murky and problematic (aesthetically and politically) world of graffiti as viewed, again, through the spectacles of Greco-Roman literature.[42] An episode in Appian's *Civil Wars* (2.16.113*)*, set in Rome in 44 BCE, gives rise to a stimulating comparison with the outlook behind Arrian's *Periplous*. Appian narrates how, in the build-up to the conspiracy against Julius Caesar, obliquely subversive graffiti swarm over Brutus' praetorial seat ("Brutus, are you dead? Wake up! You are not *his* ancestor," and so forth). Cassius explains to Brutus the purport of these graffiti:

> Or do you think it is the artisans and shopkeepers who write ἀσήμως on your tribunal rather than the best of Romans…? (ἢ σοι δοκοῦσιν οἱ χειροτέχναι καὶ κάπηλοι καταγράφειν σου τὸ δικαστήριον ἀσήμως μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ Ῥωμαίων ἄριστοι)

Cassius' words imply that graffiti is a category of writing that one would not normally associate with the elite. For, as I argued elsewhere, this is how Greco-Roman literary sources are wont to construe graffiti, essentially disconnecting the elite from graffitism. The drift of Cassius' reply to Brutus is that in the moment of a truly unique crisis, the "best" Romans (cf. Plut. *Brut*. 10.6) resort to writerly strategies that are not normally theirs.[43]

The messages on Brutus' tribunal were hardly calligraphic yet they were legible. Why does Appian's Cassius call such writing ἀσήμως, then? Can he be referring to the withheld identity of the graffitists, who operated in secrecy (*B Civ.* 2.16.112 λάθρᾳ) and obviously did not sign their messages?[44] But the idea of anonymity neither exhausts nor dominates over the semantic potential of ἀσήμως/ἄσημος in Greek usage. At the core of the epithet ἄσημος is lack of readable indication.[45] Such a lack can be actualized as blank surface,[46] shapeless silhouette (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12.61; Philostr. *V A* 2.22.2), inarticulate utterance,[47], muddled locution (Gal. *De sophismatis* 2 vol. 14.588.12), abstruse jokes (Plut. *Qaest. conv.* 712A). Notwithstanding the occasional failure of words to create any contents, language tends to be seen as the tool for converting the unsignified into meaning.

> φωνῆς καὶ λέξεως... οὐδὲν γοῦν παραλέλοιπεν ἄσημον τῶν πρὸς αἴσθησιν ἀφικνουμένων, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἐπιβάλλει τῷ νοηθέντι σαφῆ σφραγίδα ὀνόματος
>
> of voice and speech... [the linguistic ability] has left nothing of what comes to the senses undesignated but immediately attaches a clear seal of a name to every thought (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 12.65)
>
> ἐπειδὴ τῷ ὄντι ὁ λόγος τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασιν ὑπαντῶν, ῥήματα καὶ ὀνόματα προστιθεὶς χαράττει τὰ ἄσημα, ὡς ἐπίσημα ποιεῖν.
>
> since when speech verily meets the concepts, by allocation of verbs and names it engraves the unmarked so as to make it marked. (Philo *De migratione Abrahami*. 79)

It is debatable whether the engraved signs of the last passage are a spin-off of the epigraphic mentality.[48] A striking parallel that involves real-life inscriptions is found, however, in the text of a first century decree from Rhodes (*I.Lindos* 419.30-34): statues without inscriptions are, literally, asemantic (ἀνεπίγραφοι και ἄσαμοι), but will acquire meaning and identity when they get properly inscribed (ἐπισάμους ἐπιγρ[αφ]ὰν ἔχοντας).[49]

At the same time there is a strong social dimension to ἄσημος. The plural form ἄσημοι (or ἀσημότεροι) is one of the labels for the socially insignificant, the rank and file, the faceless commoner.[50] Pollux (5.162-3) includes ἄσημος in the list of terms applicable to a worthless person (ἐπὶ τοῦ μηδενὸς ἀξίου). Very frequently the litotic οὐκ ἄσημος is chosen to refer to noble lineage (e.g. Plut. *Sert*. 2.1), prominent status of individuals or places (Dion. Hal. 1.19; Eur. *Ion* 8; Strabo 10.4.1), or distinguished action (Diod. Sic. 5.52.3). So ἄσημος is a word in which cognitive anxieties mesh with social prejudice; it is thus the natural antonym of both ἐπίσημος and εὔσημος.

Revising my earlier understanding of ἀσήμως in Appian's passage (*B Civ.* 2.16.113),[51] I submit that his description of graffiti as writing produced ἀσήμως draws on the whole semantic spectrum of the word.[52] The rule of thumb is that graffiti do not signify in the normative way – they are illegible and garbled as well as anonymous and furtive. From the perspective of the elite Greco-Roman narrative, grafittism is but textual "white noise" by the socially undistinguished (the Roman graffitists of 44 BCE are an exception that proves the rule). This writing has no legitimate claim on the public space, whether intellectually, aesthetically or politically.

IV

To sum up. Having zoomed in on three gobbets from second century Greek literature, we can triangulate some of the "deep" socio-cultural assumptions about epigraphic writing among the *pepaideumenoi* of the empire. Arrian bears witness to the aesthetic and political prestige of epigraphic writing for the elite; a "well-signified" inscription is a device of imperial propaganda as well as a medium of promoting one's own culture and authority. Such epigraphy is an *a priori* glorious and culturally valid genre of writing. Its antipode, in the eyes of the literary elite, is graffiti – dubious and ignoble texts that are somehow non-signs, written ἀσήμως. The main interest of Pollux's passage is that he offers a condensed diachronic picture of epigraphic texts: visibility is counterbalanced with the theme of oldness that brings along decay, illegibility, and invisibility. The idea that inscribed monuments are vulnerable through their physicality is of course widespread in Greco-Roman literature. While Arrian in Trapezus scores a small victory with his εὔσημα γράμματα, Pollux does not let us forget that in the longer run inscriptions are bound to become ἄσημα and ἀσαφῆ (5.150).

Pollux probably envisages inscriptions that are several centuries old. The more the reason for pitting his epigraphic pessimism against Arrian's epigraphic initiative in the *Periplous*. It has been tentatively argued that the sizeable lintel stone at Trabzon, displaying four Greek words from a formulaic dedication to Hadrian (Ἀδριανῷ Σεβαστῷ δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας) below later Arabic writing, is a leftover from the monument(s) commissioned by Arrian.[53] Four words is not much, yet in fact enough to guesstimate the message, and the extant letters are "[R]egular and well cut but shallow" (Mitford 1974: 160). So, *pace* Pollux, Arrian's effort was not entirely wasted at Trapezus.

Bibliography

Adak, M. *forthcoming* 2018. "The neoi and the temenos of Dionysas. A Hellenistic lease contract from Teos." *Philia* 4.

Alcock, S.E. 1993. Graecia Capta*. The Landscapes of Roman Greece*. Cambridge.

Alföldy, G. 2003. "Die Repräsentation der kaiserlichen Macht in den Inschriften Roms und des Imperium Romanum." In L. de Blois, P. Erdkamp, O. Hekster, G. de Kleijn and S. Mols, eds., *The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power*, 3-19. Amsterdam.

Anderson, G. 1993. *The Second Sophistic: A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire*. London and New York.

Ando, C. 2000. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London.

Avotins, I. 1975. "The holders of the chairs of rhetoric at Athens." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79: 313-24.

Bearzot, C., Landucci, F. and Zecchini, G., eds., 2007. *L'*Onomasticon *di Giulio Polluce. Tra lessicografia e antiquaria*. Milan.

Bethe, E. ed. 1900. *Pollucis Onomasticon*, vol. 1. Leipzig.

Boatwright, M.T. 2000. *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*. Princeton.

Boatwright, M.T. 2010. "Antonine Rome: security in the homeland." In B.C. Ewald and C.F. Noreña, eds., *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual* (*Yale Classical Studies*, vol. 35), 169-97. Cambridge.

Bowersock, G.W. 1995. "The barbarism of the Greeks." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97: 3-14.

Bowman, A. K. 1991. "Literacy in the Roman Empire: mass and mode." In J. M. Humphrey, ed. *Literacy in the Roman World*, 119-31. Ann Arbor.

Chiron, P. 2013. “La dimension rhétorique de l’Onomasticon.” In C. Maudit, ed., *L’Onomasticon de Pollux: aspects culturels, rhétoriques et lexicographiques*, 39-65. Lyon.

Dozier, C. 2013. “Blinded by the light: oratorical clarity and poetic obscurity in Quintilian.” In S. Butler and A. Purves, eds., *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses*, 141-153. Durham and Bristol.

Galli, M. 2002. *Die Lebenswelt eines Sophisten. Untersuchungen zu den Bauten und Stiftungen des Herodes Atticus*. Mainz.

Ginsberg, R. 2004. *The Aesthetics of Ruins*. Amsterdam.

Gleason, M.W. 1995. *Making Men. Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*. Princeton.

Hardie, Ph. 1996. “Sign language in *On the Sign of Socrates.*” In L. Van der Stockt, ed., *Plutarchea Lovanensia. A Miscellany of Essays on Plutarch*, 123-36. Leuven.

Hell, J. 2010. “Imperial ruin gazers, or why did Scipio weep?” In J. Hell and A. Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity*, 169-92. Durham NC.

Hilgard, A. ed.1901. *Scholia in Dionysii Thracis Artem Grammaticam*. Leipzig.

Hillard, T. 2013. “Graffiti’s engagement. The political graffiti of the late Roman republic.” In G. Stears, P. Keegan and R. Laurence, eds., *Written Space in the Latin West*, 105-122. London and New York.

Huyssen, A. 2010. “Authentic ruins: produces of modernity.” In J. Hell and A. Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity*, 17-28. Durham NC.

Johnson, W.A. 2000. “Toward a sociology of reading in classical antiquity.” *American Journal of Philology* 121: 593-627.

Kajava, M. 2003. “Inscriptions at auction.” *Arctos* 37: 69-80.

Karivieri, A. 2002. “Just one of the boys. Hadrian in the company of Zeus, Dionysus and Theseus.” In E.N. Ostenfeld, ed., *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks: Studies in Cultural Interaction*, 40-54. Aarhus.

Kennel, N. M. 1995. *The Gymnasium of Virtue. Education and Culture in Ancient Sparta*. Chapel Hill and London.

König, J. 2007. “Orality and authority in Xenophon of Ephesus.” In V. Rimell, ed., *Seeing Tongues, Hearing Scripts: Orality and Representation in the Ancient Novel*, 1-21. Groningen.

König, J. 2016. “Re-reading Pollux: encyclopaedic structure and athletic culture in *Onomasticon* Book 3.” *Classical Quarterly* 66: 298-315.

König, J. and Whitmarsh, T. 2007. “Ordering knowledge.” In J. König and T. Whitmarsh, eds., Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire, 3-39. Cambridge.

Lada-Richards, I. 2007. *Silent Eloquence: Lucian and Pantomime Dancing*. London.

Liddle, A. ed. 2003. *Arrian: Periplous Ponti Euxini*. London.

Madsen, J.M. 2009. *Eager to be Roman. Greek Response to Roman Rule in Pontus and Bithynia*. London.

Madsen, J.M. and Rees, R. 2014. “A Roman Greek.” In J.M. Madsen and R. Rees, eds., *Roman Rule in Greek and Latin Writing: Double Vision*, 1-15. Leiden and Boston.

Matthaios, S. 2013. “Pollux’ Onomastikon im Kontext der attizistischen Lexikographie. Gruppen “anonymer Sprecher” und ihre Stellung in der Sprachgeschichte und Stilistik.” In C. Maudit, ed., *L’Onomasticon de Pollux: aspects culturels, rhétoriques et lexicographiques*, 67-140. Lyon.

Matthaios, S. 2015. “Zur Typologie des Publikums in der Zweiten Sophistik nach dem Zeugnis der Attizisten: “zeitgenössiche” Sprechergruppen im Onomastikon des Pollux.” In M. Tziatzi, M. Billerbeck, F. Montanari, K. Tsantsanoglou, eds., *Lemmata. Beiträge zum Gedenken an Christos Theodoridis*, 286-313. Berlin and Boston.

Mayer, E. 2010. “Propaganda, staged applause, or local politics? Public monuments from Augustus to Septimius Severus.” In B.C. Ewald and C. F. Noreña, eds., *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual* (*Yale Classical Studies*, vol. 35), 111-34. Cambridge.

Meiggs, R. and Lewis, D. 1989. *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.*, rev. ed. Oxford.

Mitford, T.B. 1974. “Some inscriptions from the Cappadocian *limes*.” *Journal of Roman Studies* 64: 160-75.

Moles, J. 1999. “*Anathêma kai ktêma*: the inscriptional inheritance of ancient historiography.” *Histos* 3: 27-69. (http://research.ncl.ac.uk/histos/documents/1999.03MolesAnathemakaiKtema2769.pdf)

Morstein-Marx, R. 2012. “Political graffiti in the late Roman republic: “hidden transcripts” and “common knowledge”.” In C. Kuhn, ed., *Politische Kommunikation und öffentliche Meinung in der antiken Welt*, 191-217. Stuttgart.

Nesselrath, H.-G. 2012. “Philosophers and *philotimia* in Lucian’s perspective.” In G. Roskam, M. De Pourcq and L. Van der Stockt, eds., *The Lash of Ambition. Plutarch, Imperial Greek Literature and the Dynamics of* philotimia. 153-67. Louvain, Namur, Paris and Wadpole, MA.

Newsome, D. J. 2013. “Movement, rhythms and the (re)production of written space.” In G. Stears, P. Keegan and R. Laurence, eds., *Written Space in the Latin West, 200 BC to AD 300* 65-81. London and New York.

Nicholls, W. 2013. “Roman libraries as public buildings in the cities of the Empire.” In J. König, J., Oikonomopoulou, K. and Wolf, G., eds., *Ancient Libraries*, 261-76. Cambridge.

Niquet, H. 2003. “Inschriften als Medium von “Propaganda” und Selbstdarstellung im 1. Jh. n. Chr.” In G. Weber and M. Zimmermann, eds., *Propaganda – Selbstdarstellung – Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreich des I. Jhs. n. Chr*., 145-73. Stuttgart.

Noreña, C.F. 2011. *Imperial Ideals in the Roman West. Representation, Circulation, Power*. Cambridge.

Parker, R. 2010. “Agesilaus and the bones of Alcmena.” In H.-G. Nesselrath, ed., *Plutarch: On the* Daimonion *of Socrates*, 129-37. Tübingen.

Porter, J.I. 2001. “Ideas and ruins. Pausanias, Longinus, and the Second Sophistic.” In S.E. Alcock, J. Cherry, and J. Elsner, eds., *Pausanias. Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, 63-92. Oxford.

Porter, J.I. 2006. “Feeling classical: Classicism and ancient literary criticism.” In J.I. Porter, ed., *The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome*, 301-52. Princeton and Oxford.

Porter, J. I. 2011. “Sublime monuments and sublime ruins in ancient aesthetics.” *European Review of History – Revue européenne d’histoire* 18: 685-96.

Puech, B. 2002. *Orateurs et sophistes grecs dans les inscriptions d’époque impériale*. Paris.

Rea, J. 1977. “A new version of P.Yale inv. 299.” *ZPE* 27: 151-56.

Reif, J.L. 2008. “The burial of Herodes Atticus: élite identity, urban society, and public memory in Roman Greece.” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 128: 92-127.

Reitz, B. 2012 “*Tantae molis erat*: on valuing Roman imperial architecture.” In I. Sluiter and R. M. Rosen, eds., *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity*, 315-44. Leiden and Boston.

Rood, T. 2011. “Black Sea variations: Arrian’s *Periplous*.” *Cambridge Classical Journal* 57: 137-163.

Schlapbach, K. 2010. “The *logoi* of philosophers in Lucian of Samosata.” *Classical Antiquity* 29: 250-277.

Schmitz, Th. 1997. *Bildung und Macht: zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit*. Munich.

Slater, N. 2009. "Reading inscriptions in the ancient novel." In M. Paschalis, S. Panayotakis, G. Schmeling, eds., *Readers and Writers in the Ancient Novel*, 64-78. Groningen.

Smith, R.R.R. 1998. "Cultural choice and political identity in honorific portrait statues in the Greek East." *Journal of Roman Studies* 88: 56-93.

Stadter, Ph.A. 1980. *Arrian of Nicomedia*. Chapel Hill.

Stadter, Ph. A. 2012. "The philosopher's ambition: Plutarch, Arrian, and Marcus Aurelius." In G. Roskam, M. De Pourcq and L. Van der Stockt, eds., *The Lash of Ambition. Plutarch, Imperial Greek Literature and the Dynamics of* philotimia, 85-98. Louvain, Namur, Paris and Wadpole, MA.

Stoneman, R. 1995. "Riddles in bronze and stone: monuments and their interpretation in the *Alexander Romance*." *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 6: 159-70.

Strobel, C. 2009. "The lexica of the Second Sophistic: safeguarding Atticism." In A. Georgakopoulou and M. Silk, eds., *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present*, 93-107. Farnham.

Swain, S. 1996. *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250*. Oxford.

Theodoridis, Chr. 2003. "Weitere Bemerkungen zum *Onomastikon* des Julius Pollux." *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 143: 71-78.

Thomas, E. 2007. *Monumentality and the Roman Empire. Architecture in the Antonine Age*. Oxford.

Tosi, R. 2007. "Polluce: struttura onomastica e tradizione lessicografica." In C. Bearzot, F. Landucci and G. Zecchini, eds., *L'*Onomasticon *di Giulio Polluce. Tra lessicografia e antiquaria*, 3-16. Milan.

Tosi, R. 2013. “Onomastique et lexicographie: Pollux et Phrynichos.” In C. Maudit, ed., *L’Onomasticon de Pollux: aspects culturels, rhétoriques et lexicographiques*, 141-46. Lyon

Valente, S. 2013. “Osservazioni su συνήθεια e χρῆσις nell’Onomastico di Polluce.” In C. Maudit, ed., *L’Onomasticon de Pollux: aspects culturels, rhétoriques et lexicographiques*, 147-63. Lyon.

Whitmarsh, T. 2001. *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation*. Oxford.

Whitmarsh, T. 2005. *The Second Sophistic*. Oxford.

Zadorojnyi, A.V. 2011. “Transcripts of dissent? Political graffiti and elite ideology under the Principate.” In J. Baird and C. Taylor, eds., *Ancient Graffiti in* Context, 110-133. London and New York.

Zadorojnyi, A.V. 2013. “Shuffling surfaces: epigraphy, power and integrity in Greco-Roman narratives.” In P. Liddel and P. Low, eds., *Inscriptions and Their Uses in Greek and Latin Literature*, 365-386. Oxford.

Zadorojnyi, A.V. 2014. “*Kratein onomatôn*: language and value in Plutarch.” In M. Beck, ed., *A Companion to Plutarch*, 304-20. Malden MA and Oxford.

Zanker, P. 2010. “By the emperor, for the people: “popular” architecture in Rome.” In B.C. Ewald and C.F. Noreña, eds., *The Emperor and Rome: Space, Representation, and Ritual* (*Yale Classical Studies*, vol. 35), 45-87. Cambridge.

Zecchini, G. 2007. “Polluce e la politica culturale di Commodo.” In C. Bearzot, F. Landucci and G. Zecchini, eds., *L’*Onomasticon *di Giulio Polluce. Tra lessicografia e antiquaria*, 17-26. Milan.

Zuiderhoek, A. 2009. *The Politics of Munificence in the Roman Empire. Citizens, Elites and Benefactors in Asia Minor*. Cambridge.

* I am grateful to the participants of the Durham conference, as well as to my Liverpool colleagues (especially Graham Oliver) and the volume's referees for their valuable comments and suggestions.

[1] Cf. Stoneman 1995; Slater 2009; Zadorojnyi 2013.

[2] Philostr. *V S* 593; Avotins 1975: 316-17 and 321.

[3] On Atticist lexicography in the Second Sophistic, see Anderson 1993: 90-2; Swain 1996: 51-6; Schmitz 1997: 72-91, 116-17, 123-5; Whitmarsh 2005: 43-5; Strobel 2009: 98-105; Matthaios 2015: 266-8.

[4] See Tosi 2007; Valente 2013; Matthaios 2013: 80-129 and 2015.

[5] According to Bethe 1900: xvii the extant text(s) of the *Onomasticon* derive from a Byzantine epitome, rather than the original *opus*.

[6] Cf. Chiron 2013: 47: "... le lexique de Pollux nous paraît devoir être lu comme un grand livre d'images qui reflète l'ordre du monde et nous donne en même temps les clefs d'un discours sur le monde, pour des raisons el selon un mécanisme sur lesquels nous aurons à revenir." See further Zecchini 2007: esp. 19, 24-5; König and Whitmarsh 2007: 32-4; Nesselrath 2012: 166; Chiron 2013; König 2016.

[7] Beauty (κάλλος) as the umbrella goal of rhetorical performance: e.g. [Luc.] *Charidemus* 25. Attic dialect as "a fine asset" (καλόν): Aristid. *Or.* 13 (*Panathenaicus*) 323. Pollux' contemporary (and rival?) Phrynichus stipulates that use of Greek vocabulary is a matter of aesthetic discrimination – literally, a choice between "beautiful" and "disgusting" (*Eclogae* praef. "as no one is so wretched as to prefer what is disgusting to what is beautiful" οὐ γάρ τις οὕτως ἄθλιος ὡς τὸ αἰσχρὸν τοῦ καλοῦ προτιθέναι); see Strobel 2009: 99; for fresh assessment of the "conflict" between Pollux and Phrynichus, see Matthaios 2013: 70-8; Tosi 2013.

[8] Yet with a penchant for polarities, such as love/hatred (5.113-16), praise/denunciation (5.117-118), affability/stand-offishness (5.137-9), or silence/speaking out (5.146-7).

[9] The Greek text below is transcribed from Bethe 1900:301; his critical apparatus merits separate attention.

[10] E.g. Theodoridis 2003 – yet see the caveat by Tosi 2007: 12.

[11] The Greek does not always allow to distinguish between image and script: e.g. Philo *De vita Mosis* 1.287, *De posteritate Caini* 113.

[12] Likewise, it is credible that the expression ἀμυδροῖς γράμμασι in Thucydides (and pseudo-Demosthenes) refers specifically to discoloration of paint-filled incised letters: Meiggs and Lewis 1989: 20.

[13] A celebrated passage for sure: e.g. Dion. Hal. *Pomp*. 3.3; Luc. *Hist. conscr*. 54; Aristid. *Or*. 28.69.

[14] Moles 1999: 44-51.

[15] Compare the unforgiving criticism of a "most non endorsable" (ἀδοκιμωτάτῳ) turn of phrase in an inscription on the statue of Demosthenes dedicated by the great second-century sophist Polemo: Phrynichus of Bithynia, *Eclogae* 396.

[16] The notion of writing on a hard surface is also reinforced, notably through κοιλάνας. The verb κοιλαίνω is part of the idiom of stone erosion that dates back to (at least) the gnomic line by Choerilus of Samos (πέτρην κοιλαίνει ῥανὶς ὕδατος ἐνδελεχείῃ, fr. 11 Bernabé), which was not forgotten during the Second Sophistic (cf. Gal. *De loc. aff*. 1.2 vol. 8.27K, *De temperamentis* 3.4 vol. 1.676K). See also scholia Marciana on the *Grammatical Art* of Dionysius Thrax (Hilgard 1901: 304): πόθεν γράμμα; ἀπὸ τοῦ γλάπτω, ὃ σημαίνει τὸ κοιλαίνω· οἱ γὰρ παλαιοὶ τὰ γράμματα τοῖς λίθοις ἐνεκόλαπτον ("Where does the word "letter" come from? From "I carve", which means "I scrape out", for the ancient men used to scape letters on stones."). The seemingly straightforward (ἐγ)χαράξας bespeaks epigraphic

handiwork (e.g. Plut. *Them*. 9.2; Diog. Laert. 1.48; Strabo 15.3.7; *Anth. Pal*. 11.312.3) but may extend to the idea of (grand? carefully crafted?) literary effort; thus in a Hellenistic epigram Aeschylus is saluted for his storm-like impetuosity as opposed to "carving of chiselled letters" (*Anth.Pal*. 7.411.3-4 μὴ σμιλευτὰ χαράξας γράμματα).

[17] On masculinity in the Second Sophistic, see Gleason 1995: esp. 58-81.

[18] For insightful and wide-ranging analyses, see Whitmarsh 2001; Porter 2001 and 2006.

[19] E.g. the altar-tomb of Herodes Atticus in the Panathenaic stadium: *IG* II^2 6791, with Galli 2002: 20 and plate 28.4; Reif 2008: 114-15 and plate VIIb. For archaizing inscriptions of Roman Laconia, see Kennel 1995: 87-92.

[20] See Parker 2010; on the theme of signs and interpretation in the dialogue, Hardie 1996.

[21] On abandoned townships of imperial Greece see Alcock 1993: 145-7.

[22] It is worth noting that Pollux does not provide terminology for destruction of *stelae* (as he does when talking about gods' statues, 1.11-12: τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα ἱδρύσασθαι ἐρεῖς... τὰ δὲ ἐναντία ἀνατρέψαι...) and erasure of inscriptions, such as e.g. ἐκκόπτειν. In 5.149 κοιλάνας and βαθύνας do not, in my view, suggest erasure, albeit in 2.62 both words crop up in the list of words for "gouging the eyes out". Inscriptions in the world of the *Onomasticon* do not seem to be at risk from human agency – instead, they decline peacefully over time. (Contrast Philostr. *V A* 6.4.1, where both alternatives are considered.)

[23] On ruins, real and metaphorical, as a major cultural lens of the Second Sophistic see Porter 2001; further, Porter 2011. In recent readings of the protean nature of modernity ruins are proving to be an extraordinarily fecund perspective: e.g. Ginsberg 2004; Huyssen 2010; Hell 2010; several contributions in *European Review of History – Revue européenne d'histoire*, vol. 18.5-6 (2011).

[24] In Zadorojnyi 2013: 173 Arrian's passage is discussed along similar lines, but in less detail.

[25] See Thomas 2007: esp. 150-61; from a plethora of relevant scholarship, see e.g. Alcock 1993: 181-99; Stewart 1998; Ando 2000: 304-13; Boatwright 2000: 108-213 and 2010; Karivieri 2002; Puech 2002; Alföldy 2003; Niquet 2003; Zuiderhoek 2009: 122-33, and 141-6; Zanker 2010; Mayer 2010; Noreña 2011: 200-97; Reitz 2012: esp. 317-21; Nicholls 2013. For inscriptions honouring Arrian himself, see Stadter 1980: 2-17.

[26] For Arrian's implied disparagement of the people and, indeed, the elite of Trapezus here, see Madsen and Rees 2014: 1-2.

[27] See, further, Bowersock 1995: 5-6.

[28] Most commentators tend to sidestep the question; Porter 2001: n. 34 (text on p. 276) is more upfront about his reading ("presumably Archaic Greek inscription").

[29] For example, a third-century memorandum from the vice-prefect of Egypt notes that transcripts of its contents, "in clear letters" (εὐδήλοις γράμμασιν), must be posted throughout the region (*POxy* 34.2705, lines 10-11); see also *OGIS* 665, lines 12-13; *PYale* inv. No. 299, lines 12-15, with Rea 1977. Texts such as these are often construed as evidence of the provincial government's assumptions about literacy among the people: so e.g. Bowman 1991: 121.

[30] Cf. Boatwright 2000: 140: "the passage depicts the appropriation of a provincial sanctuary [of Hermes] by imperial cult. <...> juxtaposition [of the emperor's statue] with altars and temple blurred the distinction between emperor and deity. <...> The restorations in Trapezus integrated emperor and local cult, even while enhancing the image of Hadrian himself."

[31] Compare König 2007: 15-17 on the narratorial monumentalization in the finale of Xenophon of Ephesus' novel by way of inscribed temple dedications. In Arrian's *Periplous* we may be looking at a similar trick played out, more assertively, at the opening of the narrative.

[32] On the ideological importance of imperial portraits, see Ando 2000: 228-40, 369-70.

[33] Madsen 2009: 45, 122-3; Madsen and Rees 2014: 1-3.

[34] Stadter 1980: 35-6.

[35] Indeed, the very gesture of Hadrian's statue (1.3 "it points to the sea", ἀποδείκνυσιν γὰρ τὴν θάλατταν) willy-nilly serves Arrian's intertextual game plan in the *Periplous* as a shrewd allusion to Xenophon' *Anabasis*: so Rood 2011: 142-3.

[36] Further on the visual aesthetics of the ancient (Greek) book as focal object of cultured activity, see Johnson 2000: 612-15, esp. 612: "The clarity of the letters and the width of the column are, arguably, primarily functional, but the beauty of the letter shapes, and the elegant precision of placement for the columns cannot be. ...the physical roll not only contained high culture, but was itself an expression of high culture..."

[37] See Adak, forthcoming 2018. I am grateful to Mustafa Adak for sharing this unpublished material with me, as well as to Andrej Petrovic for alerting me to it.

[38] Cf. Hsch. E 7184 εὔσημον>· εὔδηλον, φανερόν.

[39] Further references assembled in Lada-Richards 2007: 194. There is no question that praise for clarity co-existed with more or less appreciative acknowledgement of various forms of literary obscurity: see Schlapbach 2010: 255; Dozier 2013.

[40] Cf. n. 29 above. The vibes of socio-political excellence are audible in the adjective εὔσημος, too – it can be applied to the pre-eminent tribe (Ephorus *FGrH* 70 fr. 158.5, εὐσημότατον) or an impressive artefact (shield as temple dedication: Men. fr. 459 Körte; high-quality mantle: Manetho 4.422). This connotation escalates in medieval Greek; in the 13th century lexicon ascribed to Zonaras εὔσημος is defined as περιφανής· λαμπρός· καλός· ἀγαθός (*E* p. 903).

[41] Epictetus *Discourses*, *praef.* 6; Stadter 2012: 91. The posture of "indifference" towards the presentation of text among Greco-Roman philosophers ranges from depreciation of stylistics (see Zadorojnyi 2014: 305-6) to total disregard for graphemic aesthetics: Plotinus "neither

formed the letters beautifully as he wrote, nor divided words clearly, nor cared for spelling, but clung to meaning alone" (Porph. *Vita Plot*. 8 ἔγραφε δὲ οὔτε εἰς κάλλος ἀποτυπούμενος τὰ γράμματα οὔτε εὐσήμως τὰς συλλαβὰς διαιρῶν οὔτε τῆς ὀρθογραφίας φροντίζων, ἀλλὰ μόνον τοῦ νοῦ ἐχόμενος).

[42] See Zadorojnyi 2011.

[43] Zadorojnyi 2011: 127-9. Morstein-Marx 2012: 210 thinks that Appian presents Cassius' explanation of the graffiti as "disingenuous"; I am not sure this contradicts my overall argument though.

[44] Graffiti as clandestine writing: e.g. Plut. *Caes*. 62.7; Luc. *Dial*. *meret*. 10.4; see Newsome 2013. Compare the use of ἀσήμως in medical literature to describe change in the patient's condition that occurs *without* outward symptoms (e.g. Gal. *In Hippocratis librum III epidemiarum commentarii* 1.10 vol. 17A.551K τῆς ἀσήμως γενομένης ῥᾳστώνης).

[45] It goes without saying that ἄσημος is not used in the sense of "riddle" or "allegory" – absence of signification and the obscurity of deeply coded meaning are poles apart.

[46] Of a shield: Eur. *Phoen*. 1112; of papyrus sheet: Philostr. *V A* 4.44.2; of unstamped gold or silver: e.g. Hdt. 9.41, Thuc. 2.13.4, 6.8.1, Diod. Sic. 17.66.1; Pollux 3.86.

[47] Hdt. 2.2; Soph. *Ant*. 1209; Eur. *Alc*. 522; Epictetus 2.17.6; Plut. *De def. or.* 438B, *De sera* 564B, *De gen*. 587C; Pollux 5.10; Luc. *Menippus* 9, *Alex*. 13; [Luc.] *Amores* 15 ἄσημοι ... ψιθυρισμοί.

[48] Coinage (a popular source of metaphors) might be a safer explanation. Cf. Philo *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 180: "Do not you think that from the many things in nature, just as from stamped and unmarked coins, the invisible cashier ... distributes to the lover of culture the stamped and tested ones, and to the ignoramus the unstamped and unmarked?" (ἐπισήμων γε μὴν καὶ ἀσήμων ὥσπερ νομισμάτων, οὕτως καὶ πραγμάτων ὄντων ἐν τῇ

φύσει πολλῶν ὁ ἀόρατος τομεὺς οὐ δοκεῖ σοι ... τὰ μὲν ἐπίσημα καὶ δόκιμα τῷ παιδείας ἐραστῇ, τῷ δὲ ἀμαθαίνοντι τὰ ἀτύπωτα καὶ ἄσημα προσνεῖμαι;).

[49] Kajava 2003: 72-5. For the link between inscriptions and true identity/ownership, see Dio Chrys. 31.47, 83, with Zadorojnyi 2013: 371-2.

[50] E.g. Dion. Hal. *AR* 4.29.2 ἐκ ταπεινῶν καὶ ἀσήμων... προγόνων, 5.6.4; Joseph. *BJ* 4.148; Plut. *Fabius* 14.2, *Cat. Mai*. 11.3, *Sert*. 22.8; Luc. *Dial*. *mort*. 1.1.

[51] In Zadorojnyi 2011: 127 and 129 I translated "anonymously", which I now find tendentious and narrowing.

[52] Cf. Hillard 2013: 113: "in a manner indistinct, obscure and without dignity".

[53] Mitford 1974: 160-2 with pl. V.2.